

VZCZCXRO2965
RR RUEHDBU
DE RUEHMO #1689 2911414
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 181414Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4133
INFO RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 011689

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/18/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KDEM](#) [EAID](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: DEADLINE FOR FOREIGN NGO RE-REGISTRATION

REF: MOSCOW 11637

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel A. Russell.
Reasons 1.4 (b and d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Federal Registration Service officials suggested October 18 that they expect all foreign NGOs that have applied for re-registration to be approved as the deadline for applications passed. According to the latest FRS statistics, 91 NGOs have been re-registered, and 79 others have applications pending. Separately, NGOs that have not been approved told us they will maintain a low profile and wait for decisions on their applications, with some NGO contacts saying they will suspend operations. Although there may be some disruptions in programming, it appears that FRS is offering reassurances to calm some of the anxiety. We have sent suggested press guidance separately to the Department. END SUMMARY.

A QUESTION OF TIME

12. (SBU) Anatoliy Ponchenko, the deputy head of the FRS department responsible for re-registering NGOs, told reporters October 18 that FRS has re-registered 91 foreign NGOs, up from the 80 FRS reported on October 16. Ponchenko said he expected the other 79 with applications under review by the FRS to be approved as well. Some would be approved quickly, and some slightly later, Ponchenko said, but this was simply a matter of time. Ponchenko specifically listed AmCham and the Carnegie Foundation as two NGOs that had been re-registered. The FRS has also posted a list of approved NGOs and those that have decisions pending on its website (www.rosregistr.ru/docs/inko01.doc and www.rosregistr.ru/docs/inko02.doc) although the lists seem to be slightly out of date.

13. (SBU) Among the NGOs that we are tracking, USAID partners ACDI/VOCA and Winrock International were re-registered on October 17 and October 18, respectively. NDI told us that it had received a request from the FRS for "cosmetic changes" in its application and was optimistic it would be re-registered as soon as next week but would halt its programs in the interim. IRI has as yet heard nothing from FRS after submitting its application on October 4.

14. (C) Many of our contacts told us that, if they were not approved before the deadline passed on October 18, they would maintain a low profile, suspend their programs, and wait for the FRS decision. Despite additional statements from FRS Director Movchan that NGOs that were not re-registered could only conduct internal activities and should suspend external ones (reftel), some NGO contacts told us they were still unsure what exactly was and was not permissible. A few others said they interpreted the law differently and asserted they could continue with program activities, despite the FRS statements to the contrary. A UN contact who works closely with NGOs distributing aid in the North Caucasus told us that

he hoped that those who had not been re-registered would continue their operations, and the UN would approach the MFA on their behalf. Separately, Kjetil Helstad, deputy country director at the Danish Rescue Council (DRC), the largest NGO working in the North Caucasus, said it would suspend operations through October 20 and then reassess whether to resume them. (NOTE: DRC is being cautious because of some recent press stories alleging some of its aid was being diverted to Chechen rebels and past scrutiny by GOR security services.)

COMMENT

15. (C) Ponchenko's comments appear to be a further signal to reassure foreign NGOs, and FRS approvals seem to be on the rise. Ponchenko offered nothing that would contradict earlier statements that those not re-registered would have to suspend programs, however, and there may be some disruptions.

We have sent suggested press guidance separately to the Department.

BURNS